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# PRESS RELEASE

## **Growth with Equity in Mindanao (GEM-2) Program**

### **Zambo high school students get access to cyberspace**

**ZAMBOANGA CITY, Philippines** – Approximately 550 students from a local high school now have access to internet-connected computers which provide them with a pathway to the boundless world of cyberspace.

The computers link the Talisayan National High School to the World Wide Web through a satellite-based internet connection that allows the students to conduct research, create e-mail accounts and communicate with other students throughout the world.

On behalf of the US Government, Ambassador Christopher Hill, Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs, turned over the computers to the school's Parent-Teacher-Community Association (PTCA). The school received 10 internet-connected computers, software, a printer, e-books on computers and the internet, and other resource materials.

In addition to the above, selected teachers from the school will receive training in utilizing materials from the internet to enrich classroom instruction.

"The Internet connection is a gateway for students to take them beyond the borders of their community, even beyond their country, and to any destination in the world," said Ambassador Hill. He added that people with access to information and communications technology have real advantages when it comes to competing for educational and economic opportunities.

Ambassador Hill was accompanied by Secretary Jesus Dureza, Presidential Advisor for the Peace Process, US Chargé d'Affaires Paul Jones, Deputy Assistant Secretary of State Eric John, USAID Mission Director Jon Lindborg, USAID Economic Growth Advisor Robert Barnes and Zamboanga City Mayor Celso Lobregat.

Provided under USAID's Growth with Equity in Mindanao (GEM) Program, the computers are part of GEM's Computer Literacy and Internet Connection (CLIC) Program, which promotes computer literacy among students and teachers in the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM), and conflict-affected areas in the region.



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USAID's GEM Program is a five-year initiative that began in September 2002. It undertakes various projects to increase economic productivity, and to contribute to attaining lasting peace in Mindanao. GEM is being implemented under the oversight of Mindanao Economic Development Council (MEDCo).

To date, CLIC has provided internet connections and internet-connected computers to 280 high schools and comprehensive schools in the ARMM and other conflict-affected areas in Mindanao. These schools have a total enrollment of approximately 278,000 students, and more than 8,400 teachers.

In Zamboanga City, 23 schools with a combined enrollment of approximately 41,000 students have been provided with internet-connected computers by CLIC.

An additional 140 schools in the ARMM and adjacent conflict-affected areas in Mindanao will be connected by September this year, and another 280 the year thereafter. The CLIC Program plans to connect a total of 700 schools in Mindanao by October, 2007.

The computers and the internet connection will be maintained by the Talisayan National High School's PTCA. The organization has also agreed to be responsible for the payment of internet connection fees after the one-year subscription provided by CLIC expires. **(GEM Program)**